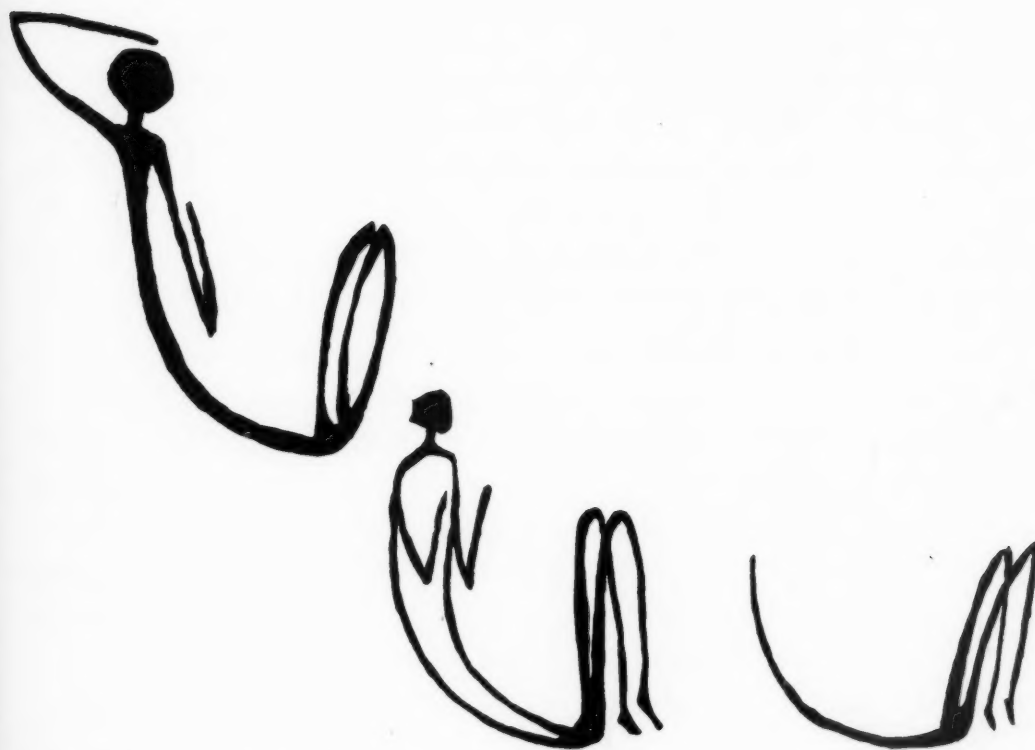


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Three crouching figures. Rock painting, Macheke, Southern Rhodesia

Prehistoric Rock Pictures in Europe and Africa

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On Tuesday, April 27, the Museum will open an exhibition of Prehistoric Rock Pictures in Europe and Africa, a selection from the remarkable group of collections in Frankfort-on-Main assembled and administered under the direction of Professor Leo Frobenius. Facsimiles and photographs will be shown of pictures painted and engraved, from five hundred to twenty thousand years ago, on the rocks of the African deserts, in the rock shelters of the African bush, on the rock shores of Scandinavian fiords and on the limestone walls of the subterranean caves of France and Spain. The facsimiles reproduce the exact colors and, with a few exceptions, the exact dimensions of the original pictures as they now appear, with chips, cracks and weathering faithfully copied in order to present a complete and accurate cultural document. They have been made by the artist members of the Research Institute for the Morphology of Civilization in the course of twelve major and several minor expeditions to centers of prehistoric art in Africa, Europe and the Near East.

Two days following the opening of this exhibition, on Thursday, April 29th, at eight forty-five p.m., Professor Frobenius will give a lecture for Museum members at the Dalton School, 108 East 89th Street. In this lecture, which will be illustrated with lantern slides, Professor Frobenius will discuss the meaning of the rock pictures in terms of the development of human culture. Beginning with the great cave pictures of Southern France and Northern Spain, painted probably in the 200th century B. C., he will trace in broad sweeps the geo-cultural course of world history to the present day. In his introduction to the catalog of the exhibition, Professor Frobenius tells why he believes these pictures have an importance for the contemporary world beyond their esthetic and documentary importance:

"For it has come to pass that we . . . concentrating on the newspaper and on that which happens from one day to the next, have lost the ability to think in large dimensions. We need a change of Lebensgefühl, of our feeling for life. And it is my hope that the enormous perspective of human growth and existence which has been opened to us by these pictures and by the researches of the modern prehistorian may serve to contribute in some small measure to its development."

Prehistoric Rock Pictures in Europe and Africa

Mr. Douglas C. Fox, author of the following article, has for several years been one of Professor Frobenius' assistants and has taken part in expeditions to prehistoric stations in Africa and Europe.

Of the European rock pictures the French and Spanish are the oldest and are the product of two separate and distinct cultures, the francocantabrian and the levant, which lived side by side for thousands of years, each without an apparent influence on the other. The people of the francocantabrian culture lived in subterranean caves and made in the main what we may call large polychrome paintings and engravings of bison, reindeer, mammoths, wild horses, cave bears and lions, while those of the levant culture lived in open rock shelters and made monochrome paintings, chiefly of human beings, dancing, hunting and fighting. The francocantabrian people who fought and hunted with the spear painted what amount to portraits, while the levant people, who were adepts with the bow, went in solely for action pictures. And that, in a nutshell, is the pictorial difference between the two cultures. Both lived in the last Ice Age, which lasted for thirty thousand years and ended, very probably, not less than twelve to fifteen thousand years ago.

The African pictures, both paintings and engravings, are, with a few exceptions, related to the European, portray all sorts of animals, show every type of human activity and can be dated, roughly, from about 10,000 B. C. down to the present day.

What do these pictures tell us?

To answer this question let us turn for a moment to the nineties when it was proved that the pictures found some time before in the Spanish cavern of Altamira were not the work of tramps or shepherds but were

prehistoric and not only prehistoric but diluvial. Diluvial means of or belonging to the Ice Age. When the hubbub and controversy attendant on this discovery subsided, it was made known that this Ice Age art had died out at the end of the Melting Period and that there was no trace of it in the Neolithic or New Stone Age cultures which first appeared several thousand years later. And if the art had died out it was assumed that the cultures which produced it had died out, too. The only person who disagreed with this theory was Frobenius, then a young man. He believed that cultures which had produced such vigorous work must have been far too vital and alive simply to die out. And if they had not



Professor Leo Frobenius



Mammoth. Rock engraving in the cavern of Les Combarelles, Les Eyzies, La Dordogne, France

died out they must have moved, for there was certainly no further sign of them in Europe. The logical place for them was near-by Africa, North Africa and the Sahara, which was at that time watered and made fertile by the rains which were derived from the melting ice of Europe. And when the rains stopped as the ice retreated northwards and the formation of the desert began, then the people of these cultures could have migrated to Egypt or the Sudan. Frobenius remembered that in South Africa the so-called Bushmen still painted pictures on the rocks and it occurred to him that these pictures might be a last remainder of the European Ice Age cultures, something which was still alive and could still be studied.

On his earlier expeditions and in the course of the five years he spent in the Sudan he encountered, time and again, customs and beliefs which reminded him very forcibly of the Ice Age cultures. He found people who first drew and then shot at the pictures of animals before setting out on the chase; he found others who tried to persuade the animals they had slain that they were not dead. If they had killed an antelope they made a clay model of it and then covered the model with the dead beast's hide. These images corresponded to and to a certain extent explained the so-called clay "idols" found in the caves of Southern France. These things moved him to the investigation of the prehistoric engravings of the Sahara Atlas Mountains and later to the expeditions, almost purely prehistoric in purpose, into the Libyan and Nubian Deserts, to Fezzan and South Africa.

Without going into detail it is possible to say broadly that these expeditions resulted first in an actual gallery on canvas of more than three thousand facsimiles of prehis-



Routes of the Frobenius expeditions of 1904-1935

toric art, the only collection of its kind in the world, and, second, in the establishment of the main lines of the migration of the European Ice Age cultures to Africa. Pictures copied in the Sahara Atlas region were found to be similar in style to the European cave pictures and were, so to speak, francocantabrian. In the Libyan Desert Frobenius found paintings which, in style, were not to be differentiated from those of the rock shelter or levant people of Eastern Spain. The levant and Libyan styles were one and the same thing. Meanwhile, in Fezzan, a rocky Sahara plateau where Frobenius made the most astounding discoveries, a plateau lying between the Sahara Atlas in the West and the Lib-



Running bowman. Rock painting from the rock shelter of Caballos, near Albocacer, Valencia, Eastern Spain

yan Desert in the East, both styles, levant and francocantabrian were apparent. Much the same thing was true of South Africa. The earlier engravings found in the Union and in Southwest Africa were pure francocantabrian, the later ones a degenerate mixture, while the paintings showed sometimes the one style, sometimes the other and, latterly, both styles together.

And so we have the picture of two individual prehistoric cultures producing two individual styles in art, cultures existing side by side in Europe, living on side by side in North Africa, one in the Sahara Atlas, one in the Libyan Desert with their point of meeting but not of combination in

the central region of Fezzan, living on again independently for a long time in South Africa and only fusing at a very late date. Rock pictures were still being painted at the end of the nineteenth century by the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, whose ancestors had probably acquired the art from the culture coming down from the north. In the Sudan they are still painted today in what we call a primitive but what is really a degenerate style. Frobenius, discovering these things and establishing these connections, has shown us a new path along which to trace the history of the course and development of a very important branch of human culture. Thanks to him,



One of the artists of the ninth expedition copying the murals in the Mtoko cave. Southern Rhodesia

we may study in Africa today the last living remnant of the European Ice Age cultures.

Germans are sometimes referred to as mystics and visionaries, but it is due to these very same unconventional qualities

in men like Frobenius and, for instance, the late Heinrich Schliemann that Germany owes much of her high position in the world of science. Both these men refused to be what is commonly regarded as sensible. Schliemann refused to look on

Homer as a poet who made up his facts from fancy or borrowed them from his muse. He took the description of the location of the Trojan city literally, decided it was the Hill of Hissarlik, dug down into it and actually discovered the site of ancient Troy. Frobenius refused to believe that the European Ice Age cultures had died and found them again in Africa. In 1932, acting on a hunch and on the strength of a few African legends he had heard, he followed his intuition to the rocky wastes of Fezzan where, the Italian Government informed him, he would find nothing, absolutely nothing. And there he made one of the greatest prehistoric discoveries which has been made in Africa in modern times. Terrace upon terrace of enormous engravings chiseled deep, deep into the weather-beaten rock, pictures ten and twelve feet high of elephants, lions, giraffes and other animals which occur nowadays only thousands of miles to the south. Here he found engravings of the francocantabrian and levant styles side by side, the first enormous and the second, too, in their physical dimensions, larger than in Spain, each, however, still in the same relationship to the other, the first still devoted to "portraits" of wild animals, the second still largely given to "action pictures" of human beings. With the francocantabrian connections already established (South Africa, 1928-30), it remained only to trace the geographical spread eastwards of the levant style, and the Libyan Desert seemed the logical place to look for further levant and, incidentally, pre-Egyptian pictures. This was done successfully on the expeditions of 1933, 1935 and with them the first rough survey of the distribution of prehistoric European art in Africa was ended.

DOUGLAS C. FOX

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Attendance at exhibitions

New Horizons in American Art (September 14-October 12, 1936)	14,666
John Marin (October 19-November 22, 1936)	20,032
Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism (December 7, 1936-January 17, 1937)	50,034
Vincent van Gogh Rugs Made at the Crawford Shops (January 20-February 2, 1937)	19,002
Modern Architecture in England Posters by E. McKnight Kauffer (February 10-March 8, 1937)	11,353
Photography, 1839-1937 (March 17-April 18, 1937)	30,429

6
2
4
2
3
9